

We claim:

1           1.     A method for providing conditional access to media content, the method  
2     comprising:  
3           receiving a request for the media content by a remote media rendering device,  
4           the request received from a middleman server connected to the media  
5           rendering device on a local network;  
6           receiving a device ID associated with the remote media rendering device;  
7           verifying based on the received device ID whether the remote media  
8           rendering device is approved to receive the requested media content;  
9           and  
10          granting the request if the remote media rendering device is approved to  
11          receive the requested media content.

1           2.     The method of claim 1, wherein the device ID uniquely identifies the  
2     remote media rendering device that made the request.

1           3.     The method of claim 1, wherein the device ID uniquely identifies the type  
2     of remote media rendering device that made the request.

1           4.     The method of claim 1, wherein the device ID includes at least one of the  
2     following information items corresponding to the remote media rendering device: a

3 manufacturer ID, a model number, a serial number, a MAC address, a portion of a MAC  
4 address, or a digital signature.

1 5. The method of claim 1, wherein granting the request comprises sending  
2 the requested media content to the middleman server for delivery to the remote media  
3 rendering device.

1 6. The method of claim 5, wherein granting the request further comprises  
2 establishing a secure communications channel with the middleman server before sending  
3 the requested media content to the middleman server.

1 7. The method of claim 1, wherein granting the request comprises  
2 establishing a session with the middleman server for sending the requested media  
3 content to the middleman server for delivery to the remote media rendering device.

1 8. The method of claim 7, wherein the number of concurrent sessions is  
2 limited to a predetermined maximum.

1 9. The method of claim 1, further comprising:  
2 obtaining a rating associated with the requested media content;  
3 accessing an approved rating range for the media rendering device; and  
4 denying the request if the requested media content has a rating outside the  
5 approved rating range.

1           10.     The method of claim 9, wherein the requested media content is an audio  
2     file and the approved rating range specifies that no parental advisory content should be  
3     delivered to the media rendering device.

1           11.     The method of claim 9, further comprising:  
2                 receiving an input from a user to modify the approved rating range for the  
3                 media rendering device.

1           12.     The method of claim 1, wherein the request is received from and the  
2     media content is transmitted to the middleman server over the Internet.

1           13.     A method for obtaining a media item from a remote media service  
2     provider, the method comprising:  
3                 receiving a request for the media item from a media rendering device over a  
4                 local network;  
5                 receiving from the media rendering device a device ID that identifies the  
6                 media rendering device;  
7                 sending the request to a media service provider;  
8                 sending the device ID to the media service provider;  
9                 if the device ID indicates that the media rendering device is authorized to  
10                receive the requested media item, receiving the requested media item;  
11                and

12 delivering the requested media item to the media rendering device.

1 14. The method of claim 13, wherein the device ID uniquely identifies the  
2 type of media rendering device that made the request.

1 15. The method of claim 13, wherein the device ID includes at least one of  
2 the following for the media rendering device: a manufacturer ID, a model number, a  
3 serial number, a MAC address, a portion of a MAC address, or a digital signature.

1 16. The method of claim 13, wherein the requested media item is an audio  
2 file and is delivered over the Internet.

1 17. A method for delivering media from a media service provider to a  
2 plurality of subscribers, each subscriber communicating with the media service provider  
3 using a middleman server coupled to a set of media rendering devices on the subscriber's  
4 local network, the method comprising:

5 receiving requests for media items from the plurality of middleman servers,  
6 each request being for delivery of a media item to a media rendering  
7 device on a subscriber's local network;

8 receiving device IDs associated with requests, each device ID identifying the  
9 media rendering device that made the request;

10 for each request, verifying based on the received device ID whether the media  
11 rendering device is approved to receive the requested media item; and

12                   for requests in which the media rendering device is approved to receive the  
13                   requested media item, transmitting the requested media item to the  
14                   associated middleman server for delivery to the requesting media  
15                   rendering device.

1                   18.     The method of claim 17, wherein the device ID uniquely identifies the  
2                   type of media rendering device that made the request.

1                   19.     The method of claim 17, wherein the device ID includes at least one of  
2                   the following for the media rendering device: a manufacturer ID, a model number, a  
3                   serial number, a MAC address, a portion of a MAC address, or a digital signature.

1                   20.     The method of claim 17, further comprising:  
2                   establishing a secure communications channel before transmitting requested  
3                   media items to each middleman server.

1                   21.     The method of claim 17, wherein transmitting each requested media item  
2                   comprises establishing a secure communications session with the middleman server for  
3                   transmitting the media item.

1                   22.     The method of claim 21, wherein the number of concurrent sessions for  
2                   each subscriber is limited to a predetermined maximum.

1           23.     The method of claim 22, wherein the subscribers pay a fee for the service  
2     that is based, at least in part, on the predetermined maximum of concurrent sessions  
3     allowed for the subscriber.

1           24.     The method of claim 17, wherein the subscribers pay a fee for the service  
2     that is based, at least in part, on the number of media rendering devices that are approved  
3     to receive protected media content.

1           25.     The method of claim 17, wherein the subscribers pay a fee for the service  
2     that is based, at least in part, on the types of media rendering devices that are approved to  
3     receive protected media content.

1           26.     The method of claim 17, further comprising:  
2                 receiving from at least some of the subscribers an approved rating range  
3                 associated with at least some of the media rendering devices on the  
4                 subscribers' local networks.

1           27.     The method of claim 26, further comprising, for each requested media  
2     item:  
3                 obtaining a rating associated with the requested media item;  
4                 accessing an approved rating range for the media rendering device that  
5                 requested the media item; and

6 denying the request if the requested media item has a rating outside the  
7 approved rating range.

1 28. A computer program product comprising a computer-readable medium  
2 containing computer program code for performing the method of any one of claims 1  
3 through 27.

1 29. A system for conditionally delivering media content over a network, the  
2 system comprising:

3 a middleman server application for running on an electronic device coupled

4 to a local network having a number of media rendering devices

5 thereon, wherein the middleman server:

6 receives a request for a media item from a media rendering device

7 on the local network,

8 transmits the request to a media service provider,

9 receives a device ID associated with the requesting media

10 rendering device, and

11 transmits the device ID to a media service provider; and

12 a system server remotely coupled to the middleman server, wherein the

13 system server:

14 receives the request from the middleman server,

15 receives the device ID from the middleman server,

16                               verifies based on the received device ID whether the media  
17                               rendering device is approved to access the requested media  
18                               item, and  
19                               grants the request if the media rendering device is approved to  
20                               access the requested media item.

1               30.     The system of claim 29, wherein the device ID uniquely identifies the  
2               type of media rendering device that made the request.

1               31.     The system of claim 29, wherein the device ID includes at least one of the  
2               following for the media rendering device: a manufacturer ID, a model number, a serial  
3               number, a MAC address, a portion of a MAC address, or a digital signature.

1               32.     The system of claim 29, wherein the system server transmits the  
2               requested media item to the middleman server over a secure communications channel.

1               33.     The system of claim 29, further comprising:  
2                       a user interface remotely coupled to the system server, the user interface for  
3                       communicating with the system server, allowing a user to provide an  
4                       approved rating range associated with the media rendering devices on  
5                       the local network.



1           34.     The system of claim 33, wherein, in response to a request for a media  
2     item, the system server:

3                 obtains a rating associated with the requested media item;

4                 accesses an approved rating range for the media rendering device; and

5                 denies the request if the requested media item has a rating outside the

6                         approved rating range.

1           35.     The system of claim 34, wherein the requested media item is an audio file  
2     and the approved rating range specifies that no parental advisory content should be  
3     delivered to the media rendering device.

1           36.     The system of claim 29, wherein the system server is coupled to the  
2     middleman server over the Internet.

1           37.     The system of claim 29, wherein only those media rendering devices that  
2     cannot provide a digital output of received media items are approved to access media  
3     items from the media service provider.